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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **BIG OIL VICTORY REVERSES BAN ON DRILLING IN FLORIDA WATERS**

**TALLAHASSEE** --- Pandering to Big Oil, Florida House Republicans overwhelmingly voted today to reverse a 19-year-old ban on drilling in state waters and to open Florida's coastline to oil and natural gas exploration.

The proposal would allow the Governor and Cabinet to negotiate with oil and natural gas companies to drill between 3 and 10.3 miles off Florida's coastline.

House Bill 1219 surfaced in the Florida Legislature in the waning days of the session and failed to receive appropriate hearings in House committees and councils.

Democrats overwhelmingly opposed the measure, noting the possibility of oil derricks cluttering the coast and oil spills potentially polluting Florida's beaches and the Everglades.

Representative Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg) said the measure came to the House floor after just one committee hearing. "We are exposing our priceless beaches to huge unfathomable dangers," said Rouson.

Representative Evan Jenne (D-Dania Beach) said that if oil rigs set up operation in Florida, there would be a barely noticeable drop in oil prices. He said that the savings would be no more than a few cents when gas hits \$4 a gallon.

“Refineries and oil facilities will begin to dot the coast,” said Representative Jenne. “Examine the facts from sources other than Big Oil. There are dozens and dozens of reasons, based in fact, to oppose this measure.”

Representative Keith Fitzgerald (D-Sarasota) said the proposal is different than the oil drilling issues that were discussed during last fall’s presidential campaign.

“We are not considering drilling in federal waters far off our shores. This bill proposes drilling 3 to 10 miles from our shores,” said Representative Fitzgerald.

“I come from a part of Florida with some of the best beaches in the world,” added Representative Fitzgerald. “Siesta Key is annually rated as one of the top 10 beaches in the world specifically because of its pristine, white crystalline sands. Even with the smallest oil spill, the lifeblood of our local economy is at risk. This bill is a dagger in the heart of the economy of our coastal communities.”

House Bill 1219 was roundly criticized in recent days by numerous Democrats in Congress from Florida, including U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, and opposition has been voiced by former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham of Florida.

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